



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

GRAD

GV

1277

.H58

BUHR

A 409391



1

•



THE
DECLINE AND FALL
OF WHIST

*An Old Fashioned View of New
Fangled Play*

BY
THE AUTHOR,
OF "WHIST OR BUMBLEPUPPY"

John Pettit

London

G. E. WATERS 97 WESTBOURNE GROVE
SIMPKIN MARSHALL & Co. STATIONERS' HALL COURT

1884

062 200152

A 409391

CONTENTS.

	Page
Introductory	7
Wooden Arrangement, No. 1—	
The Signal and the Echo	9
Wooden Arrangement, No. 2—	
Tampering with the Discard	12
The Modern Game	19
Wooden Arrangement, No. 3—	
Original Lead of the Longest Suit	20
Wooden Arrangement, No. 4—	
The Lead of the Penultimate and its Congeners	25
Some Pillars of the Modern Edifice—	
Pillar No. 1—The Philosophy of Whist ...	33
Pillar No. 2—Illustrative Whist Hands ...	41
Pillar No. 3—Developments, Generalizations, and Extensions of Principle	47
Whittling at the Small End of Nothing ...	52
Whist Player's Wail	56
Arithmetic Applied to Whist by a Small Boy ...	70
Conclusion	73

139716

PREFACE.

As it has been taken for granted, because no abhorrence of the recent proceedings of the New Academy has been openly expressed, such feeling is non-existent, this opusculè has been written in the confident belief that it expresses the opinions of a majority of civilized Whist-players.

LONDON, *Christmas*, 1884.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF WHIST.

IF we only live long enough we all pass through at least three stages—one authority says seven;—we grow, we attain our prime, we decay; and Whist, apparently, is not exempt from the common lot.

Somewhat obscure in its origin, it gradually developed, it arrived at its zenith, then began to go down hill, and became the piteous spectacle we now see, until, flying from the whist-room as from a pest-house, the players are betaking themselves in shoals to other and unholy games.

There is an opinion that Whist is at the present moment so exceedingly popular that it is fast becoming a serious rival to afternoon tea, and this, so far from being inconsistent with my original statement, rather strengthens it; for it is quite possible that a certain percentage of the more reputable refugees from the clubs, averse to gambling, may have sought—and I hope I may add, found—consolation in the family bosom and the domestic rubber.

The golden age of Whist lasted from the time when Cavendish arranged in a systematic form his selections from the wisdom of our ancestors, until the death of Mr. Clay, twelve years ago; then the age of wood began, and if the whole subsequent literature of Whist had been publicly burnt by the common hangman, including *nostri farrago libelli*, it would have been an unmixed boon; so greatly has the evil preponderated over the good.

WOODEN ARRANGEMENT, NO. I.—THE PETER.

THE peter, simple in its inception, and ineffably stupid in execution, was already on the scene, and though among decent players it soon found its level, and became comparatively inoffensive, was the pioneer of the mass of wood-paving which has since been laid down; echoes, tampering with the discard, penultimates, antepenultimates, developments, extensions of principle, rules for exceptional play, with a few other matters *quod nunc perscribere longum est*, all equally inelastic, but differing from the signal in this, that while its mission is to supply your partner with brains and to dictate to him, regardless of the state of his hand, to play trumps when you think fit, theirs is to do away with all necessity for any brains whatever.

The call for trumps appeared in this form, and in this form Bumblepuppydom believes in

it to this day. "Whenever a player is strong in trumps, whether he has any reason for wanting them out or not, he informs the table of the fact, and it is imperative upon his partner to take the most violent and extraordinary steps to get in and lead him one." However, the proceeding—when not useless—turned out so injurious to the perpetrator, that it had to be mitigated (for in that benighted day it had not been discovered that it was philosophical to lose on principle), and now reads something like this,—“whenever a player is strong in trumps, and considers from the fall of the cards that it is expedient they should be drawn, he makes those facts public,” and as his partner is usually in possession of the lead at the moment, he is able to play a trump without unduly straining himself.

Compulsory peters, anticipated peters, and peters late in the hand, are matters of common sense and intelligence, and attempts to lay down

arbitrary conventions as substitutes for those qualities are the main causes of the present decadence of Whist.

THE ECHO.

THE echo is reported to be an extension of the signal, and is the most innocuous of the series ; it does very little harm, and always amuses somebody.

When the signal-man holds half the trumps and the echoer the remainder, it amuses them and does not hurt the adversary ; for weight will tell, wholly irrespective of conventions.

When there is a possibility of saving the game, and it comes into play before the hand is over, which it seldom does, its usual effect is to induce the signal-man (seeing his partner drop a high card) to endeavour unsuccessfully to force him ; then they suffer grief and pain, and the adversary in his turn is amused.

WOODEN ARRANGEMENT, NO. 2.

THIS resulted from tampering with the discard. Though Mathews (*circa* A.D. 1800) in two short sentences laid down the true and only principle of discarding: "If weak in trumps, keep guard on your adversaries' suits; if strong, throw away from them," fifty years afterwards it was discovered by the "little school" that "the old system of discarding was just this—when not able to follow suit, let your first discard be from your weakest suit." Rough on poor Mathews! but the absent are always wrong.

However, by a process of evolution, to the first step of which no exception can be taken, we are next told—(a) "When you see from the fall of the cards that there is no probability of bringing in your own or your partner's long' suit discard originally from your best protected suit." "You must play a defensive game."—*Cavendish*.

Then, as the evolution proceeds, and we come to (b), we catch the first glimpse of the woody fibre, "for the sake of a short and easily remembered rule," it is the fashion to say, "discard originally from your strong suit when the adversaries lead trumps, but this aphorism does not truly express the conditions." (It does not indeed; far from it! for the adversaries may lead trumps and the strength may turn out on the other side; and why, under any circumstances, currency should be given to an erroneous fashion is a question I have repeatedly asked in vain), and here the pupils rush in, with that zeal which outruns discretion, overpower the master and cut the Gordian Knot with (c) *strongest*. Fourthly, I am informed whenever I take my walks abroad in Whist circles, (d) that with trumps declared against me I must not only discard from my strongest suit, but by that discard point out to my partner—and I presume my adversaries—the

suit I wish led, and we are all on our backs on the wood pavement.

Is this a defensive game? Surely it is pedantry run mad! Why am I, in these frightful circumstances, fighting for dear life, and breathing with the greatest difficulty, to disclose my vital parts to a powerful and remorseless enemy? Where am I to get a suit from that I wish led? Why am I to be debarred from using my common sense—if I have any—and holding on to everything in obedience to my old friend Mathews and Cavendish on Whist, for both of whom I have the highest respect? If by good luck I do hold a very strong suit, I used to be able to point out that fact by discarding the head of it; now I am told “you must not do that; it is not *the game*”—whatever the game may be; “it shows the adversary too much;” so that I am in this absurd dilemma—if I have a really strong suit, I am to keep it dark; if I have a suit in which I hope to make a trick by remaining very

quiet, I am to invite my partner to put me under the harrow by making me third player. *O tempora! O mores!*

Bad in itself, and ensnaring to others, this outrageous latter-day discard is cowardly to a degree ; for while it does no particular injury to the player with a strong hand, it knocks down and jumps upon the weak vessel.

What am I to do with a suit in which I hold absolutely nothing, say the two, three, four and five? Did the doctrinaires never hear of such a suit? One would imagine not. Am I to discard from king, queen and another, or from knave to four, in order to keep four cards like that? How about retaining every card of a powerful suit, regardless where the trumps may be, knowing that unless it can be brought in somehow or other, the game is gone? When I am compelled to discard from a weak five suit, is that an order to my partner to lead in a singly or doubly guarded king?

If these difficulties—and there are numbers of others—only occurred to me, with my natural modesty, I should consider myself the victim of some congenital defect; but this is not the case; far from it. The confusion on this head alone is awful, and what do the authorities teach us? I have already quoted Mathews and Cavendish on Whist; the second edition of Clay does not mention the forced discard, but it is mentioned in the last new and *improved* edition with a vengeance: here I learn to my horror and amazement that “the discard from the *strongest* suit * * * *is admirably explained and developed in the ‘Laws and Principles of Whist,’ by Cavendish.*”

Now this statement, which was made in 1881, is puzzling. I have already pointed out that the “laws and principles of Whist” by Cavendish neither explain nor develope anything of the kind, admirably or otherwise, before and after that date, Cavendish in *The Field* has contra-

dicted it in toto. His latest utterance, on which I can lay my hand, is this. "The aphorism—discard from your strong suit to an adverse trump lead is very imperfect"—as any aphorism, attempting to lay down a fixed law for such an intricate subject, is bound to be—"and misleading, and often gives rise to misunderstandings between partners as to the true character of the discard. A player should carefully consider the aspect of the game at the time the discard is made. With no indication to guide him, he may assume his partner's first discard to be a protective one, if the adversaries have led, or called for trumps; but if, notwithstanding an adverse lead, he can place the command of trumps with his partner, or must so place it in order to save the game, he should assume the reverse." Here, though somewhat verbose and obscure, he recognizes that the subject bristles all over with difficulty.

Now let us return for a moment to the

improved Clay. "The discard from the strongest rests upon, * * * and upon the very reasonable argument, that the partner is directed to lead the suit indicated by the discard." That a protective discard is a direction to my partner to make me third player in the suit may seem reasonable to the modern doctrinaire, but it is not the view ordinarily taken of it; then having produced his highly objectionable animal in *puris naturalibus*, the Editor winds up by *thanking Cavendish for his imprimatur*.

This way madness lies ! What Cavendish ? how many Cavendishes are there ? there is certainly a Cavendish on Whist, and there is a Cavendish in *The Field* ; that makes two, on this point pretty much of one mind. Is there a third, who appears for one brief moment, without father, mother, or descent, mysterious as Melchizedek, just to contradict both his namesakes, and then disappears for ever in the ewig-keit ? This conundrum is too much for me ; I

give it up, merely enquiring with an ancient philosopher :—

Quousque tandem abutere patientiâ nostrâ?

THE MODERN GAME.

BECAUSE a game has been overlaid by petty detail, and injured by having its square pegs driven into round holes, it does not on that account become a modern game, any more than the Trojan priest, when the serpents set upon him and strangled him, became a modern Laocoon. First, this figment of a modern game is devised, and then used as a convenient peg to hang other figments upon.

Whist, as far as I have been able to ascertain from a tolerably careful study of the leading authorities, “has slowly broadened down from precedent to precedent;” there has been no solution of continuity; and other investigators hold the same belief. “We suspect that Caven-

dish very often objected to that ancient plagiarist Mathews for stealing his ideas." "In the bulk the two systems agree." — *Westminster Papers*.

"There is no essential difference between modern and old-fashioned Whist, *i.e.*, between Hoyle and Cavendish, Mathews and J. C." — *Mogul*.

So "the modern game" would appear to be an imaginary line, on one side of which stand all the authorities from Hoyle to Clay, including Cavendish on Whist;—recently designated fossils—on the other, "the great twin brethren," Cavendish in *The Field* and the 'Theory of Whist.'

WOODEN ARRANGEMENT, NO. 3.

THE ORIGINAL LEAD OF THE LONGEST SUIT:—
This, according to all accounts, is the essence of modern Whist, and if not too much modern it is certainly modern enough; for take any fossil you

please, again including Cavendish on Whist,—you must keep in mind the doubtful personality of the three Cavendishes—and you will find no such lead; that it is generally advisable to lead from your strongest suit, a dogma old as the everlasting hills, is quite another matter.

All authority is dead against the strongest, and *a fortiori* against the longest suit, *always* being led.

In the Westminster Papers for February and March, 1878, the point was thoroughly ventilated; it is not my intention to quote the articles in extenso, I have given you chapter and verse, and if you are anxious to master the subject, you can either read it for yourself, or consult the originals.

The editor shows that Hoyle, Paine, Major A., Mathews, Clay, and Cavendish on Whist, all teach that, though the strong suit should *generally* be led, the lead depends upon the hand and the score. He points out that “Mathews recog-

nizes the fact, which we all deplore, that we must in the nature of things, have bad hands or peculiar hands, such that the ordinary lead must be departed from;” that Hoyle, giving directions how to play for an odd trick, says, “Suppose you are elder hand, and that you have ace, king and three small trumps, with four small cards of another suit, three small cards of a third suit, and one small card of a fourth suit, how are you to play? You are to lead the single card.” That Major A.—whom Clay describes as likely to be very formidable among the best players of the present day—goes so far as to say, “with a bad hand, do *not* lead from three or four small cards.”

So much for the books! His conclusion from observation is “In watching good players, we find them averse to leading from their long suit unless they have sufficient trumps or other cards of re-entry to enable them to establish that suit. So also with the score advanced; no one dreams of trying to bring in the long suit.” “According

to the play that we see, with great weakness the rule is rather to lead strengthening cards. For our own part we should be inclined to say "Lead from your strong suit only when you are sufficiently strong to bring in that suit with the aid of reasonable strength on the part of your partner." "The supposed orthodox lead is absurd." My own opportunities for observation have been considerable, and I say "ditto to Mr. Burke." In the teeth of this, we have Cavendish in *The Field*, and Dr. Pole, the great twin brethren again, affirming not only that the strongest suit should always be led, and that the strongest suit is the longest, but that "this system has stood the test of the experience of a century and a half."

The open, erect and manly foe,
Firm we may meet, perchance return the blow.

The three tailors of Tooley Street might have
chanted in unison,

Sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas,

with impunity, if they had only given their correct names and address. It was because they attempted to pose as the people of England, with a large P, that the laugh came in.

In the same way Brown, Jones and Robinson, collectively or individually, have an undoubted right to depose Clay from his pedestal, and substitute wood as a better material for our idol; but they have no right to palm it off on the worshippers as the real Simon Pure.

I should like an answer to this simple question; if the longest suit is always to be led, how is it that every Whist book, without exception, gives minute directions for leading short suits?

Another red herring trailed across the scent is that a four suit is a normal suit, and that being normal it must always be led. In the first place it is the strong suit, not the long suit, which is the normal lead; in the second place, what is 'normal' by no means invariably takes place,

otherwise why does 'abnormal' still remain in our dictionaries ?

When you hold a bad hand, it is just as philosophical to acquaint your partner with that unpleasant circumstance by leading a strengthening card, as it is to lead a long weak suit and leave him floundering about in ignorance of everything but its length, and it has a much greater weight of authority at the back of it.

Pondering where the Dioscuri got hold of such extraordinary notions, it flashed across my memory that in childhood's happy hour, I had read in Lemprière, that though they spent half their time with the immortals, they passed the remainder "in another place;" hence these tears!

WOODEN ARRANGEMENT, NO. 4.

THE LEAD OF THE PENULTIMATE AND ITS CONGENERS.—Playing Whist some five and twenty years ago with Cam for my partner,

he led the trey of a suit in which I held king, queen and another, I won with the queen, and on the return of the king, which was taken by the fourth hand, Cam played the deuce. From subsequent enquiry I found it was a lead of his own, to inform the table he had three remaining, and no honour in his own suit; I had never seen the device before; I did not think highly of it when I did see it, and am of the same opinion still; however, in 1865 it appeared in "What to Lead," and was strenuously objected to, by Mogul among others; but it is only due to the memory of my old friend,—in his day an authority second to none—to state, that though tenacious of his proposition, I never knew him suggest for one moment, that it was an extension of any known, or unknown, principle.

The credit of discovering a brand-new principle, and that the penultimate lead is a legitimate extension of that discovery is, as far as I

am aware, entirely due to Cavendish's unassisted ingenuity; and here we learn incidentally what, in his view, a principle is; for, after he had concluded to his own satisfaction, that from suits containing a sequence that does not head the suit, the lowest card of the sequence should be led — although Clay denied this flatly, and objected to the lead in toto—he straightway elevated it into a principle.

How the penultimate lead is an extension of it, I have no idea; he appears to have evolved both the principle and the extension from his own internal consciousness. Anti-Cavendish puts this with such force and perspicuity in the Westminster Papers, February, 1873, that the whole article is well worth reading, and in these convention ridden days is quite refreshing. I make an extract or two from his conclusion. "The reasoning on which Cavendish grounds this invention is so faulty, that one feels that in the pursuit of his hobby of 'extension of prin-

ciple' he loses his head altogether." "It is a purely arbitrary signal and might much more plausibly have been proposed as a means of giving information without all the rigmarole about 'extension of principle,' &c., &c., but then if so proposed, players would have refused to adopt it; now, as disguised by Cavendish under a cloud of words, too many will be ready to jump at it to save themselves the trouble of thinking." "No greater mistake can be made than to imagine that it is desirable in every case to give information to your partner, and players who are always endeavouring to do this, without reference to the state of their hands, will surely in the long run suffer. Whether to give or withhold information frequently tries the discretion of the best players, and with weak hands the great necessity is to keep your adversaries in ignorance, without deceiving your partner. Now if this new signal were generally adopted, players would, as regards the lead in question, be

deprived of all discretion, and be compelled either to give information to their adversaries, which might be used against them with fatal effect, or else deceive their partners, whereas the present lead, if it gives no information does not deceive your partner. Another disadvantage is that in nearly all cases where either adversary wins the second round, he will know whether or not he can force his partner in that suit without risk of being overtrumped, but if the original leader wins the second round his partner will rarely get any positive information as to his strength until the third round." "These refinements of artifice are utterly opposed to the essence of scientific Whist, viz., the necessity of rational deduction. To substitute signals which convey information, without troubling the brains, must tend to spoil the game."

Objections have repeatedly been taken to these conventions on moral grounds, but as long as the Church and Stage Guild and kindred

associations exist, there seems no reason why we should be troubled to look after our own morality.

For my own part, although believing the principle to be extremely doubtful and the extension far from clear, I am quite prepared to admit that when you have a reasonable expectation of bringing in a five suit, it is desirable that you should make your partner acquainted with the exact length of it, but I am equally prepared to deny its expediency when there is no chance of bringing it in; if such a suit must be played, and you may be so unfortunately placed that it is unavoidable, it would be much better to keep the length of it buried in your own bosom.

Oddly enough when another writer, emulous of extending the master, and seduced by the analogy that what was sauce for the goose must be sauce for the gander, suggested that if it was imperative to lead the lowest but one of five, it

must be equally obligatory to lead the lowest but two of six ; (indeed so clear is this next link in the chain, that it was the very first thought of myself and some half-dozen other light-minded persons, the moment we heard of the principle ; but, by ill luck, the seed fell on barren ground, for so far were we from realizing the importance of our discovery, and taking immediate steps to protect the patent, that, sad to relate, *solvuntur tabulæ risu*), we find Cavendish in *The Field* for a time deprecating such an eminently logical extension, till I wake up one Saturday morning and read that the antepenultimate does not go far enough, and that under pain of becoming fossils, we must all lead the lowest but three of seven, but four of eight, and so on until we arrive at the lowest but nine of thirteen, when further extension in that direction becomes impracticable.

Fortunately this arrangement has been simplified, for the game would have become even

slower than it is, if whenever a player had a ten suit, he had to repeat to himself, lowest but one of five, two of six, three of seven, till he eventually arrived at lowest but six of ten, and after much laborious whittling at the small end of nothing, the ultimate outcome is, with any number of a suit from five to thirteen, to lead the top but three.

Apropos of this same ultimate outcome, in the Westminster Papers for January, 1875, there is a remarkable statement: "We have the opinion, never published, of a personal friend, that while you ought to lead the lowest card in four suits, you should lead *the third from the top* in five suits;" and this anonymous genius is still "unwept, unhonoured and unsung." Such is fame!

SOME PILLARS OF THE EDIFICE.

PILLAR NO. I.—THE PHILOSOPHY OF WHIST.

IN case the *ipse dixit* of Cavendish in *The Field*, or “the preface,” should fail to convince, we have also had the sacred name of Philosophy dragged in to countenance these proceedings.

Ever since there has been any record of philosophers, their schools appear to have been about as numerous as themselves. Plato for his own share had five different sets of followers. All the systems contradicted each other, and the disciples of each master usually held different views as to his tenets; as this has continued down to our own day, for the dogmatic philosopher who recently died in Chelsea spent more than half a century in contradicting himself, while two of the most prominent disciples of Comte are fighting tooth and nail at this very moment, when we hear of *the* philosophy of Whist,

the enquiry naturally arises, which philosophy? The Whist philosophy of Cam, propounded day by day, was, that there is no absolute never or always. The same idea runs through the entire treatise of Clay; and if there is one point more especially distinctive than another in the teaching of that great master, repeated again and again, and constantly insisted upon, it is that all the maxims of Whist are open to innumerable exceptions, that the coat must be cut according to the cloth, and that he is the finest Whist-player who can most readily grasp that fact. (Here I may remark, in a parenthesis, that though the late Mr. Clay eventually gave a qualified assent to the penultimate lead and the forced discard, it has yet to be shown that he assented to either the one or the other, in its present uncompromising and preposterous form, a form which is utterly repugnant to his every public utterance).

This is considerably opposed to the fearful and wonderful philosophy of Dr. Pole, the basis

of which appears to be that it is always imperative to lead your longest suit, which he naively admits to be a losing game. It is unfortunate that his lines are drawn in a commercial age, for if he had only lived in the time of Don Quixote he might have taken high rank.

To ignore the teaching of a long line of illustrious dead, to set precedent at defiance, and deliberately to go out of your way in order to lose, is an extension of the old stoical principle, "under all circumstances to keep your temper," in the very best latter-day manner; but reasonably doubtful as to the success of such an appeal if left to stand upon its own bottom, he invokes elementary algebra to his aid. Now elementary algebra is not devoid of good points; by its means we learn that a man may—either in time or in eternity—hold 635,013,559,600 different whist-hands. Moreover, every hand, he will have an entirely different purpose; sometimes to win the game; sometimes to save it, and with that

end in view, will lay himself out to make tricks varying from three to eleven—below and above that number, since the invention of short Whist, he has no need to trouble himself—and the moral most people would draw, would be that in that portentous number of hands, some of them would require very different treatment from others ; the philosopher of Whist, however, thinks not, but would fit all those six hundred and thirty-five thousand odd millions of hands into the same Procrustes' bed, and would always lead the longest suit. Again, Whist is an art; if in any sense a science, it is certainly not an exact science, and the application of algebra to art is somewhat limited. There are far too many unknown quantities in the equation.

Take our old friend king and another in the second hand ; Permutations and Combinations will inform us sooner or later—I should imagine later, for to my certain knowledge, a series of four thousand two hundred and nineteen is not

enough—as to the number of times we shall make it or lose it, whether we play it, or do not play it; but they will give us no clue as to the extent of damage we may receive when it is played and taken by the third hand, or as to the loss we incur when the ace is in the fourth hand, by importing uncertainty into the game. When we do not put it on and lose it, we may—or may not—lose one trick; when we put it on and lose it, we may lose any number. The whole system of the newly suggested play of the first and second hand is undermined by the fundamentally false assumption that the lead is always from a long suit; that everybody, irrespective of the score, has merely to ascertain which is his longest suit, and then to take immediate steps to put the table in possession of its exact length is so transparently simple, that such extreme simplicity in a game of skill is enough of itself to arouse the gravest suspicion.

Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam,
Multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit.

Just to see how the plan worked, six consecutive times have I with king and two others—using my best judgment as to the lead—passed the queen led, and six times have I lost a trick ; this may show that my judgment was bad ; but it shows, with much more absolute certainty, that the lead, in those six cases, was not from numerical strength.

If the lead always were, it needs no demonstration to prove that the holder of the king has seldom anything to gain by heading the trick ; that might be granted without the slightest demur ; only how about the combination game ? If the fourth player has to play the ace on the queen led, where is the king ? certainly, not according to our present knowledge, in the second hand with one or two of the suit.

As to not heading the queen with king and another, one of the latest Cavendish coups, it is really so puerile, he must be practising upon our credulity ; the veriest bumble-puppest that ever

crawled upon this earth is too well aware that, every now and again, a trick may be made by the most absurd and outrageous play—or rather want of play—otherwise the breed would have been as extinct as the dodo.

There are positions enough, where the king is the only card of re-entry and where, unless the fourth hand can get in with the ace and draw the trumps, the game is over, but it is not so here; the coup succeeds, simply and solely, because, by a most improbable chance, the fourth hand holds one, while the second player holds two of the suit. Genuine, unadulterated bumble-puppy! Whenever I am induced to propound a system of Whist philosophy, enlivened with texts from the Gospel according to Cocker (*absit omen*), its fundamental principle will be that four in thirteen goes twice.

If I with king and another head the queen and make it, and have nothing else to do, I can return the suit, ruff the third round and make

three consecutive tricks; not a bad thing in these hard times when the rental of our estates is constantly diminishing, and the income tax has gone up another penny.

Now suppose I pass it and my partner makes the ace, he must open a new suit. We have had a surfeit of statistics lately, still, if the gentleman at present in possession of the calculating machine of the late Mr. Babbage would kindly turn the handle, and let me know how many tricks on the average are lost by merely opening a suit, I should be much obliged to him. When the leader and his partner either hold the whole of it, or nothing at all, it may be done with impunity, but under ordinary circumstances it usually entails a loss of one trick and often two.

I have considered at some length the original lead of the longest suit, and the lead of the penultimate, because on these two commandments hang all the latter-day law, but not the profits: for on the strength—for want of a more

appropriate word—of these figments, at this very moment our guide is attacking the recognised play of the third hand, our philosopher is suggesting an entirely new set of proceedings for the second hand, while both guide and philosopher are doing their level best to assist our friend in New York to bouleverse the leads.

PILLAR NO. 2.—ILLUSTRATIVE WHIST-HANDS.

IF you watch a thousand ordinary whist-hands, the great bulk will be illustrative of (1) human stupidity ; a few (2) of super-human cunning, and out of the remainder the faddist may pick out (3) one or two to countenance any form of mania from which he may be suffering at the moment.

The first class—always provided that you meet it in the spirit and not in the flesh—is often amusing.

The second is, if skilful, generally open to the

objection that, as the same result might be attained by a more simple and equally legitimate method of play, there is an enormous amount of good skill gone wrong.

The third class—and this is the class we have now to deal with—is never amusing, seldom skilful, and not uncommonly misses its tip altogether; for instance, two hands given in the ‘Theory of Whist,’ to illustrate certain leading principles of the game, were promptly gibbeted by another eminent authority, and are still hanging in chains in the Westminster Papers, for September and October, 1873, as “most striking examples of brute force and stupidity.”

In any case they prove nothing. Suppose some malefactor, with a turn for leading singletons, were to bring before the public a dozen or two of hands illustrative of results which would make any leader of the top card but three livid with envy, at the same time suppressing two, four, or six dozen hands, where the lead had

brought him to condign grief, would that in any way tend to show the lead was good?

Still carefully selected hands, although we may disapprove of their *raison d'être*, are not necessarily revolting to the intelligence; but there is a limit, and attempting to show such a moral as this, that with king and another, it is dangerous to play the king second hand on the queen led, because your partner may hold the ace single, is perilously near it.

I am not perhaps so conversant with the Whist-hands in *The Field* as I ought to be, for the difficulty of its Catherine-wheel notation deters me; but about two years ago, I came across a few *dissecta membra* intended to bolster up some mechanical substitute for brains, and a similar fragment with a similar intention has lately been quoted in that paper. To make the matter more simple we will transpose it from the first to the third person. "A holds ace, knave, five, four, three and two of hearts; his partner B

holds king, queen and a small heart; A leads the ace of hearts. He then leads three of hearts. His left hand adversary, Y, plays ten, B queen, and Z, fourth player, nine. Neither adversary has asked for trumps," which is entirely a matter of opinion; for as no human being knows, or ever will know, where a single trump is, Z might have begun a call, and finding the whole heart suit dead against him, and knowing the exact position of every card in it, thought fit to conceal it. "Consequently two of hearts must be in A's hand, and three other hearts besides." Up to this point, except the little difference of opinion as to a signal, our unanimity is wonderful. "All the trumps now come out," and B, in the confusion, gets rid of his king of hearts. That brief sentence about the trumps, like the pie in *Pickwick*, which was all fat, is rather too rich. If Y and Z had them and they "came out" against their will, it was rough on Y and Z. If Y and Z, with the fact staring them in the face

that B holds the king of hearts and A the remaining four—for we are all agreed that this is clear—took any active steps to induce trumps to “come out,” they must have been rampant lunatics; even if Y and Z were not lunatics, but as ardent admirers of the antepenultimate lead, and anxious for its success, at any cost to themselves, merely did their best to ensure the “coming out” of the trumps, how B got the opportunity to discard the king of hearts would still be involved in Stygian darkness. The most reasonable supposition, if Y and Z really did lead trumps, is that he dropped it quietly under the table, in sure and certain hope that they were the very last people to take a mean advantage of him. If A and B, in addition to the entire suit of hearts, had also the strength in trumps, nothing could prevent those hearts from being brought in.

Though futile for the purpose designed, the fragment has two other morals.

(1) That if A and B hold the command of trumps, and an entire plain suit, they can bring it in, *in spite* of proclaiming its exact position to the adversary.

(2) That if Y and Z hold the trumps, when an antepenultimate is led, those trumps not only appear to "come out" of themselves like mushrooms—spontaneously and without obvious cause—which in itself would be sufficiently aggravating, but they "come out" at the most inopportune moments, to the dire discomfiture of their unfortunate owners. (If any decently responsible person will guarantee that my adversaries will always do their best to get trumps out for me whenever I lead an antepenultimate, nobody shall in future have to complain of my not going far enough in that direction).

Special arrangements for taking a quantity above five are seldom of practical use; on the contrary, such suits have an innate propen-

sity for making themselves unpleasantly conspicuous, without any *mécanique*.

It must either be a very weak cause to require such advocacy, or an uncommonly strong one to survive it.

Nec tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis.

PILLAR NO. 3.—DEVELOPMENTS, EXTENSIONS OF
PRINCIPLE, AND GENERALIZATIONS.

The earth hath bubbles as the water hath,
And these are of them.

A DEVELOPMENT is such an ambiguous expression (for it may be either good, bad or indifferent) that, on that understanding, we may freely admit its existence; but an extension of principle has several varieties, is as slippery as an eel, and both the extension and the principle must be regarded with a wary eye.

The principle that is extended by substituting 'always' for 'generally' and then appealing

boldly to history to sanction the alteration is one form. Another form is to invent both the principle and the extension when the occasion arises, as in the principle of leading the bottom of an intermediate sequence, and its extension to penultimates, antepenultimates, and so forth. Logicians term this *petitio*, not *extensio principii*.

Even when you have got firm hold of a good principle, or a good india-rubber ring, you will get into trouble if you stretch it indefinitely.

There is no sounder principle going than that it is generally desirable to acquaint your partner with the state of your hand, but it neither follows that you should place it face upwards on the table, nor avail yourself of those extensions known to Hoyle as "piping at whisk," though the first is undoubtedly legitimate, and the second, if it were only first duly exploited by some faddist in *The Field*, would be quite as legitimate as any extension that has appeared there in our time.

While these extensions of principle are in the air, some regard should be paid to the interests of that numerous class whose information is entirely derived from inspection of the last trick. Already they had to find out in that obscure medium what suit was led, who led it, and how each card fell. Now, they have in addition, to track to their lair several missing minor cards, and when they have succeeded in doing so, to decide whether they indicate a signal, a nine suit, the lowest of a long head sequence, or the lunacy of the leader. If their happiness is to be taken into consideration one important extension of principle must be added to the list.

It is a principle—vide law 91—that we may all see the penultimate trick, and the extension that we may all see the antepenultimate and so on up to thirteen, proceeds *pari passu* with the other famous demonstration; it also conveys the same kind of information, in exactly the same way, for it shows those who have eyes in their

heads that which they already knew, and reduces to a more hopeless state of imbecility those dependent on its aid.

I do not advocate it for two reasons; in the first place, because I abjure and detest the principle itself; secondly, because the only time I ever attempted to extend a principle, I was accused of *sorites*, which sounds like some unpleasant form of skin disease, and such insinuations, though untrue, are disagreeable. As I do not wish to expose myself to them, I make a present of the idea to any pupil of the new academy who may be intent on further spoiling the game.

“One man’s meat is another man’s poison,” and what the late Government considered to be extensions of principle, developments and generalizations, their successors stigmatize as—

“Red ruin and the breaking up of laws.”

The present condition of Whist may be briefly

and graphically expressed by the well-known epitaph :—

“ I was well, I wanted to be better, now I am here.”

Among all the quasi-extensions of spurious principles, one fine old crusted principle is in danger of being lost sight of altogether, and now that attention is called to it, I sincerely hope that no modern pedant will be tempted to extend it. The principle is, TO LEAVE WELL ALONE.

Such are the three remarkably unstable pillars, on which rest the proposals for upsetting the recognized play of the first, second, and third hand ; and if they give way, down comes the entire superstructure. Happily, the purely academic discussion on the American leads is not likely to trouble the general public much ; its fascinations for them are not great, but if those fascinations should induce the doctrinaire mind to lessen its mischievous activity in other

directions, it may yet turn out to be a blessing in disguise. As we are threatened with a book devoted to these leads, I confine myself to mentioning that in answer to eighteen enquiries, "What do you think of the new leads?" sixteen replies were to the effect that a good player, if he took his coat off and went into the matter thoroughly, might master them in six months, and a duffer, under the same circumstances, in half a century, but that in neither case was the game worth the candle; the advice of the other two, to "go to Bath and get my head shaved," was rude, and the latter half of it quite uncalled for.

WHITTLING AT THE SMALL END OF NOTHING.
CONVENTIONS AND ELABORATE RULES FOR
EXCEPTIONAL PLAY.

So many articles have we had endeavouring to explain what a convention is, from the Cavendish point of view, that at last the common-

sense view, driven from these inhospitable shores by the interminable flux of words, has taken refuge at the Antipodes ; it was seen in the office of *The Australasian* in May, 1884, and I presume it is there yet. If at any time you happen to be passing through Melbourne, and send in your card to the editor, I have no doubt he will show it to you. Item,—two long articles giving minute directions when not to lead trumps from five.

If the basis of play is always to lead the longest suit these directions must be altogether unnecessary ; the answer is self-evident. “You should invariably lead the penultimate from a five suit of trumps, save and except when you hold a plain suit of greater length, and then you should lead the highest but three.”

Oh that mine enemy always would ! for, I regret to say, some short time ago, a miscreant—one of the soundest Whist-players in this country—took up the four, five and six of

diamonds (trumps); ace, knave, ten, eight, four and three of hearts; king, six and four of spades; and the eight of clubs, *which he led*. His score was one, ours four. I was second player, and held, *inter alia*, ace, queen, seven and six of clubs; and king, ten, eight, seven and five of trumps; my partner held king, knave, five and four of clubs, and though he turned up the queen of trumps, we lost four by cards and the game.

Now this is a man who reads his newspaper, and should, in common decency, have led the ace and four of hearts. Somewhat nettled by the success of his nefarious play, I said to him, "even if you have not seen the Fruits of Philosophy, you must know better than to lead a singleton," and this was his ribald reply:—

How sad and mad and bad it was,
But still how it was sweet.

To return to my subject. If any one were to ask me when not to lead trumps with five, I

should reply, " My very dear sir, it is not in my power to provide you with intelligence, the stock in my possession is barely sufficient for my own use ; with five trumps, you should lead them nearly always, especially when you are very weak in the plain suits ; but if, after acquiring a fair knowledge of general principles, you are unable to find out for yourself when it is inexpedient to lead them, I am quite sure nobody can teach you, and you may depend upon this, that a multitude of minute rules, purporting to explain to you when you should not do that which you would be right in doing ninety-fives times in a hundred, are a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.

Lay to heart the story of that little fish, which desired to know all the mysteries of fishing-tackle, and when its prayer was granted, was unable to assimilate its knowledge, and perished miserably from inanition. At the same time, if, after what I have said, you should feel disposed to commit those two articles to memory, and to

repeat them to yourself whenever a difficulty arises, there is nothing in the laws of Whist to prevent you."

It is sad to reflect that such an incomparable talent for applying a straight-waistcoat to every thing should have blundered into a wrong groove; a tithe of the energy and perseverance devoted to throttling intelligence, and knocking the brains out of the game, would have placed our villainous code of laws, and our incongruous and contradictory decisions on a sound basis; but it was not to be; *dis aliter visum*, and the following pathetic appeal, reprinted from "*Knowledge*," has been treated with silent contempt:—

A WHIST-PLAYER'S WAIL.

Whist-players have long been suffering acutely from three uncertainties—uncertainty of the laws, uncertainty of decisions, and uncertainty of authority.

The laws are ninety-one in number, and, in "Cavendish on Whist," are supplemented by forty-three expla-

natory notes and a couple of suppositions, which again have been further explained—if explain is the right word in this connection—by innumerable irresponsible decisions. Now, though it may be Utopian to expect such a badly-worded jumble of laws and definitions ever to be superseded by an intelligible code, is it impossible to have these decisions based on a principle of some kind, or, at any rate, for them to be consistent with themselves?

At one time the decider has confined himself to the strictest letter of the law, at another time he has strained it to breaking; sometimes he has read the laws one with another; sometimes he has taken one and left the other out in the cold; sometimes he appears arbitrarily to give his decision out of his own head, quite irrespective of any law whatever; and finally, and worst of all, after consistently maintaining one position for years and years, until—rightly or wrongly—some doubtful point is settled, he suddenly turns round, with his tail where his head always used to be, flatly contradicts himself, and throws it once more into confusion.

The usual excuse for a *volte face* of this kind is, “that this is a free country, where every man has a right to change his opinions;” and I never hear that dreadful exordium without instinctively making for the door,

knowing from bitter experience that mischief is brewing. "That judges themselves differ, and the judgment of one court is often over-ruled by another," this also is, I am afraid, true, though it has no bearing on the matter in hand ; for here we have a judge who, on his appointment to the bench—granting, what is strongly disputed, that a Whist arbitrator is a judge and has a bench—having found a well-established precedent and taken it for his guide in numerous judgments, one fine day reverses it without notice and without leave to appeal.

To show that I am not making random accusations, I give three examples—there are others in stock, but these appear sufficient for my immediate purpose :—

I. "The cards are cut. In taking up the packs, I join the two packs, but leave one card on the table; this card would have been the middle, not the bottom card. I claim a fresh cut ; my adversaries claim that it is a misdeal. Am I entitled to a new cut or not?" Answer, No. 1. "We think you cannot make your adversary cut a second time. We do not think that when you left a card on the table it could be said that there was any confusion in the cutting, and unless you can make out that what you did amounted to confusion in the cutting, it is a misdeal."

Answer, No. 2. "The claim is void. There is

nothing in the laws or the custom of the table to make this a misdeal." Both these decisions are by the same authority. A more recent authority says, "According to the old rules, a misdeal might have been claimed; but not now, under Law 34." The explanation is ingenious, if not ingenuous; but it is open to the objection that, as the first decision is dated December, 1873, nine years after the present laws came into force, it is scarcely water-tight.

II. If A asked B whether he had any of a suit in which B had renounced, and B, instead of replying, turned and quitted the trick, and was subsequently brought to bed of one or more, his silence, combined with turning and quitting the trick, was ruled to be an answer in the negative within the meaning of the Law and he had revoked.

This is a decision of Clay's; and though disputed at the time, was the settled practice of Whist for fourteen or fifteen years.

Three or four years ago this decision was reversed, and authority has now taken its stand upon the literal interpretation of Law 74.

III. Some little time since my opinion was asked on this point. It was sent to me by a friend in Australia. "A and B *v.* Y and Z. Eleven tricks have been played.

At the twelfth trick A leads a Heart, Y plays a Club, B plays a Spade. Before Z has played, Y throws down his last card, which turns out to be a Heart. Has he revoked?"

Being mortally afraid of putting my foot in it, I much prefer to leave the mysterious borderland between sanity and insanity to experts in lunacy; however, in the sacred cause of friendship, I screwed up my courage, and, with with considerable trepidation, gave an opinion to this effect. "It appears to me that Y certainly—this sounds unpleasantly like slang, but such is not my intention—revoked if the club was a trump, and, probably, if it was a card of a plain suit, for in playing his last card he either led or abandoned his hand, which has always been held to be an act of play establishing the revoke."

The question was next submitted to three of the best-known and most-respected authorities in this country—all champion deciders—whom we will call P. Q. R. P. replied, "Unless clubs are trumps I do not think Y. has revoked. He has not played again. He has exposed a card. If clubs were trumps I think he has played again (am not sure). The case is not sufficiently stated for a positive opinion."

Q. and R. did not regard it as insufficiently stated in

any way, and they had no hesitation in saying that Y had not revoked.

When by the next mail it turned out that hearts were trumps, when, consequently, the revoke was a shade more doubtful than before, while P made no further sign, Q and R came to the unanimous conclusion that Y had revoked. The authority at the Antipodes who ruled originally that there was no revoke, remains in the same mind up to the present time.

Is this "vacillating and inconsistent," or is it not ?

Here in a not very complicated difficulty—if only there was any agreement on first principles, we have

(a) A benighted outsider thinking a revoke is established, because a well-known decision overrides the law ;

(b) An intelligent colonist thinking it is not established, because he considers the law to override the decision.

(c) Authority No. 1 giving a somewhat uncertain sound, but on the whole inclining to the belief that it is either a revoke or it is not ; evidently a man of judicial mind.

(d) Authorities 2 and 3, while never in doubt for a moment, first affirming a thing to be white, and afterwards, when it has been bleached and is to some extent whiter than before, with unabated confidence affirming it to be black ; and there an important question, involving the highest penalty known to the law, rests.

If the force of absurdity can go beyond this, then "it can go anywhere and do anything."

The facts are in a nutshell. Either *Y*, when he threw his card up, abandoned his hand, or he did not. If he did, and *if that is an act of play which establishes a revoke*, then he revoked; if he did not, he had merely to say so, *cadit quæstio*; the card is an exposed one—"just that, and nothing more." Only we have one, or rather two little difficulties to get over. Does abandoning the hand establish a revoke? and, if it does, is the decision authoritative—that is to say, of compulsory obligation?

Who the original decider was, or who gave him authority to make a penal enactment in the teeth of Laws 58 and 73, I do not know. All I do know is that the decision must not be fathered on Clay, for his case 8, "*A has revoked; his claim of the game* and throwing down his cards must be held as against himself as an act of playing," is not on all fours; it occupies much firmer ground.

Here are two well-matched decisions, "Silence is an answer." "Throwing down the cards establishes a revoke,"—of course, with the proviso that one has been made—both strain the law; both entail the revoke penalty; the only difference is that one is in the *ipsissima verba* of Clay, the other is a mangled excerpt; if the

strong one has been quietly and surreptitiously burked, why, in the name of ordinary patience, does the weaker survive?

If decisions are retreating all along the line to a safer standpoint on the letter of the law, well and good ; only tar them all with the same brush, and take some means to let the public know it.

Before the lamented demise of the Westminster Papers, disputed points were argued at length ; whether in the number of counsellors there was wisdom, or whether too many cooks spoiled the broth, in either event we heard both sides. Question and answer could be found together, and if the decision did not invariably commend itself to our intelligence, we at any rate knew what the decision was, and that was the main point ; but now our position has changed greatly for the worse. The present practice of Whist—a direct incentive to gambling—is this ; whenever any doubt arises, instead of being able to lay their hands upon the recorded decision and settle it at once, the parties concerned first make a bet of one or more sovereigns and then write to the *Field*. On the ensuing Saturday afternoon a certain amount of money changes hands ; two people are wiser, but the increase of wisdom is confined to themselves, and at the very next table the same process is repeated ; while numerous quiet, well-

meaning people like myself, who never bet, never know anything at all ; for such answers as these, " X. It is a revoke," " A. S. S. You cannot call on Z to pass it," partake very much of the nature of Valentines in that, however interesting they may be to the recipient, they arouse no corresponding emotion in the world at large.

Lastly, with regard to the authority.

Whist-players are law-abiding to a degree, and sufferance is the badge of all their tribe ; but still they would like to know how the authority obtained what the imperfect Member for Northampton is so fond of calling his mandate ; whether by divine or hereditary right, by competitive examination, by election, by appointment from the Crown, or whether he sits upon us by " the good old rule, the simple plan" *of force majeure* as the Old Man of the Sea sat upon Sindbad.

Bartholomew Binns, an official with the highest credentials, after being selected from numerous candidates, and receiving a mandate from the sheriffs of London and Middlesex, has his decisions reviewed by twelve good men and true, and reporters are present who publish them through the length and breadth of the land ? How is our executioner appointed ? Who reviews his decisions ? How are they promulgated ? Not that it matters to me, personally. When my fatal Monday comes round and

sus. per coll. is written under my name in the family archives, I do not imagine it will trouble me much whether the operator was born great, has achieved greatness, or has had greatness thrust upon him. I do not object to the instrument, I object to the system; but many Whist-players are more fastidious, and protest strenuously against being treated worse than other criminals. They hold that the position of a functionary who takes upon himself to decide important questions of law, and to upset old-established precedents, and manufacture new ones on his mere *ipse dixit*, should be very clearly defined, and that if one man is to unite in his own proper person the attributes of prophet, priest and king—three single gentlemen rolled into one—he should be duly anointed, consecrated and crowned, *ad hoc*.

For questions involving common courtesy, for insoluble verbal quibbles, for ethical questions of this type, "Ought A to sit quietly at the table while his partner B picks Z's pocket? and if he ought, is it right for him to share the plunder?" and for the host of minor cases which constantly arise, and for which no law could possibly provide, no better arrangement than the present could be devised. As long as maniacs exist in the land, klepto-, dipso-, homicidal, or Whist—offences must come, and in disposing of them—where a *cadi* is the only effective treatment that

can be openly suggested—the editor of the *Field* is *facile princeps*,

In faith he is a worthy gentleman,
Exceedingly well read.

Only if he is to be the *de facto* authority in *all* cases, why not give him the three sanctions just mentioned, and make him the authority *de jure*? Then—as the *Field* is not a Whist gazette, and can scarcely be expected to devote its columns to advertising gratuitously every legislative change, and any space it has to spare is used rather for elaborating the ceremonial than for settling the laws of the cult—in token of our esteem, let us club together and present him with a piece of chalk, a duster, and a black board, to be set up in some easily-accessible spot—say, the middle of Pall Mall, or St. James's-street. Make it the official notice-board! When new decisions are created let them be legibly inscribed upon it, *coram populo*! When well-known decisions are abrogated let them be carefully rubbed out at once. Since the Bastille was destroyed and *lettres de cachet* with it, there has been no authority without a notice-board; the Salvation Army has its “War Cry,” and the Pope himself, when he propounds a new dogma, propounds it *ex cathedra*.

That is one remedy. Though it is not perfect it has

two advantages - it is inexpensive, and if in future any of us should still remain in ignorance, we should be in ignorance by our own fault, and not by misfortune ; and at any rate it is a more simple and less tortuous plan than upsetting well-known decisions in an unofficial newspaper, while new editions of our two standard Whist-books are subsequently brought out without one word of comment or warning.

The alternative remedy—by no means novel, it has been suggested, *usque ad nauseam*, and I only bring it forward again because at present confusion is worse confounded than it has ever been in my recollection—is for the leading clubs to appoint a small committee of representative Whist-players, with power to revise any decisions they may see fit ; and when they have revised them either to append them to the laws of Whist, or to place each decision as a rider under its own particular law, and every such decision should be final.

Questions of strict law should never have been submitted to an arbitrator at all ; they should have been cleared up long ago by the legislators themselves ; though important, they are not very numerous, and as they have been well threshed out, and all their difficulties are known, the entire matter might be completed in a few hours. Why should London wait ?

The constitution of Whist and the constitution of our beloved country are both at the mercy of a grand old man of exuberant verbosity, each of whom is able, in some extraordinary way, to persuade himself that the side of any question on which he happens to be looking, is not only the right side, but that it positively has no other, in spite of the fact that in previous stages of his existence, he has himself, both recognised and vehemently supported that other side.

For twelve years our despot—a despotism worse than Russian, which is tempered by assassination—has had no rival near the throne; for five he has absolutely had nobody even to contradict him, and what is the upshot? Why this :—

THE EDIFICE WHEN LAST THE MODERN SUBSTITUTE.
SEEN IN 1879.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. That the strongest suit
should generally be led. | 1. That the longest suit
should always be led. |
|--|---|

2. That with a bad hand—which unfortunately is quite a normal condition—a strengthening card, or the head of a short suit, should generally be led.

3. That the penultimate is a useful lead when there is a reasonable prospect of bringing the suit in.

4. That no greater mistake can be made, than to imagine it is desirable in every case to give information to your partner.

5. This being entirely a new extension, except as a joke, what view would have been taken of it five years ago it is impossible to say positively; but I have my own opinion.

2. That with any kind of a hand, you have merely to pick out the four suit, which is the normal suit, and lead it.

3. That (as far as the innumerable exceptions permit) the penultimate of a five suit should always be led.

4. That you should always give the table information of the exact length of your suit.

5. That with suits from five to thirteen, the top card but three should be led.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. That the discard, when the adversary declares strength in trumps, is a protective discard, to prevent him, if possible, from establishing any suit. | 6. That the discard, when the adversary declares strength in trumps, is from the strongest suit, and is a direction to the discarder's partner to lead that suit. |
|--|---|

That the aphorism, discard from the strong suit, is very imperfect and misleading.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 7. That when an honour is led, if the second player holds a higher honour and not more than three of the suit, he should head the trick. | 7. That if an honour is led, the second player should never head it except with the ace. |
|--|--|

Always doubtful of my own arithmetic, I am indebted for the following figures to a little boy who has recently passed the Fourth Standard at an adjacent Board-school. He informs me that during the last decade three and a quarter inches of small print have been devoted by the editor of the *Field* to explaining that the modern

rule of play at Whist is to discard from your best protected suit, when trumps are declared against you ; twenty-one square inches to supporting the usual lead of a small card, from ace to four ; and three square inches to reversing Clay's and his own long-established decision, that silence is an answer ; seventy-eight square inches to minute directions when not to lead trumps from five ; three hundred and fifty-eight square inches to explaining what a convention is, and one acre, two roods, and eight perches—be the same more or less—to articles and hands purporting to illustrate the American leads, and placing the sheep on the right and the goats on the left, we have :—

EVIL.

One acre, two roods, eight perches,
plus three square inches,
plus seventy-eight square inches,
plus three hundred and fifty-eight
square inches.

GOOD.

Twenty-one sq.
inches,
plus
three and a quar-
ter sq. inches.

My young informant adds that the evil, if represented in square inches, is 6,273,079, and is in proportion to the good as 258,683 to 1.

The moral would seem to be, that sufficient ink may make an acre and a half of white paper black, but will never make those two sides balance.

These be thy gods, O Israel.

Our ancestors built up and handed down to us a noble game: be it our aim to keep it undefiled. The task is difficult.

Facilis descensus Averni est,

*Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hic labor, hoc opus est.*

An ordinary mind might withstand the philosophy of losing its money on principle; it might resist the blandishments—not to say fallacies in this connection—of the first part of algebra; American leads will never trouble it; but a system which absolves Mrs. Juggins and her

constituents (a most numerous and important body, where noses are counted and not weighed) from any necessity for drawing an inference, and at the same time assures them, that not only is it the concentrated wisdom of all the ages, but that they are its hierophants, is a great power.

Yet, how can man die better than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers, and the temples of his gods?

And if the modern iconoclast will scatter those ashes, and will destroy those temples, we can at any rate dree out our weird, in the proud consciousness that we have done our best to prevent him.

CONCLUSION.

In twelve years one general principle has been faintly upheld, while three have been stretched on the rack and distorted till their own mothers would scarcely know them.

If poor Mathews were to revisit the glimpses.

of the moon, and to come across that *improved* edition of Clay, could he ever guess that the rickety abortion in the preface had ever been his own healthy and intelligent bantling?

Whist-players of every degree, from Deschappelles to Mrs. Juggins, are now all supposed to lead the same card—I know they try; for, after much anxious thought, I have often seen the penultimate led from king, queen and three small cards—and with such a hand as this: ace, king, queen, knave of diamonds; two, three, four, five, six and seven of hearts; two and three of clubs; and the deuce of spades (trumps), whatever the score, if Deschappelles were to lead the king of diamonds, and Mrs. Juggins the four of hearts, according to our latest teaching, the old woman would receive the gold medal for scientific play, while Deschappelles would not be in it.

More than that, although while Mrs. Juggins was making futile attempts to establish her long

suit, and to explain she held originally six, several diamonds would probably be discarded, and she would be in danger of never making a trick at all; the apparent end of conventions, philosophy and American leads being not to make tricks, but to enable the table to count your hand, the award would be right.

Twelve years has the mountain been in labour, and, as Miss Squeers remarked, with ungrammatical emphasis, "this is

THE HEND."

